

## Additions to the East African avifauna

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During a visit to the Bwamba lowlands (0°52'N, 30°05'E) and the Budongo Forest (1°45'N, 31°35'E) in western Uganda between 26 February and 5 March and 6–9 March 1990 respectively, five additions to the East African avifauna were recorded. Each species was seen and/or heard by various members of a party which included, in addition to the authors: M.A.C. Coverdale, T.M. Gullick and Dr A.D. Johns. Details of all five have been submitted for ratification to the East African Rarities Committee.

Three of the five species, Spot-breasted Ibis *Bostrychia rara*, White-throated Blue Swallow *Hirundo nigrita* and Ituri Batis *Batis ituriensis*, are recorded here. Two other species, Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubi* and the Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* are included in Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (in prep.).

### *Bostrychia rara* Spot-breasted Ibis

On the first evening, 2 March, on which we camped in an area of *Cynometra* (ironwood) forest on the banks of the Kirimia River with its associated *Afromomum* swamps, JSA flushed two ibises from one such swamp. They were not seen well in the poor light at 19:40 hrs, and could not be identified specifically at the time. Fortunately they flew over the camp and were heard by the rest of the party, and their calls were tape-recorded by FD-L and TMG. They were clearly not Hadada *B. hagedash*, judging by their calls, and unlike Green Ibis *B. olivacea* heard recently by JSA in Nigeria. Two birds rose from the same site next evening, and again flew over the camp. Similar calls were twice heard later in the same evening, and again at 06:35 hrs on 5 March, but it was not known if more than the same two birds were involved. Further tape-recordings were made.

Dr A. Brosset (*in litt.*) stressed that *B. rara* and *B. olivacea* are practically impossible to distinguish by plumage and size in the field, and that voice is the best character for separation. Sonographic analysis of the recordings made by FD-L, and deposited with the EARC, clearly show that the Bwamba birds are *B. rara*: *rara* does not have the honking quality of *olivacea*; we have listened to tapes of both, the latter published by Keith & Ginn 1971; C. Chappuis' unpublished tape of *rara* presents one bird with a soft voice, a second much harsher, and both birds accentuating the second or third notes (cf. Brosset & Erard 1986). Both birds in Bwamba have identical, soft voices with the accent on the second to third notes. Chapin (1932) pointed out that compared to *olivacea*, *rara* stresses the second note, but this important point was overlooked by Brown *et al.* (1982). The crepuscular, even nocturnal, activity of these birds is also typical of *rara* rather than *olivacea* (Brosset & Erard *loc. cit.*).

According to the distribution map in Brown *et al.* (1982) *rara* occurs in West Africa eastwards through Zaïre to the border with Uganda along the Semliki River. The nearest record we have been able to trace is from Penge (1°23'N, 28°06'E) (Chapin 1932). Thus, its occurrence in Uganda was not unexpected.

### *Hirundo nigrita* White-throated Blue Swallow

A single bird glimpsed by JSA over the Semliki River at 09:00 hrs on 28 February was thought to have been this species. During a search for it downstream later in the day he found a pair and confirmed the identification. They were seen frequently during the next two days by all observers, as they used—in characteristic fashion—several perches on

branches projecting from submerged trees in the river. These perches were defended vigorously against other hirundines—Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* and Eurasian Swallow *H. rustica*—and several Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops persicus*, which approached them. A second pair was discovered by MACC about 1 km upstream on 1 March.

These small rather thick-set dark shining blue swallows, with noticeable small white throat patches, were seen very well. The very short square tail with white spots at the base of each feather, conspicuous above and below when fanned on landing or in banking, were clearly visible, as was the white throat patch, at over 100 m.

This is the first record for East Africa, but it is known from the Zaïre side of the Semliki, where it was seen at Beni (0° 28N, 29°28E) by Chapin (1932).

### *Batis ituriensis* Ituri Batis

Two pairs were found in Budongo Forest on 8 March at 800 m. The first pair was engaged in courtship feeding, and both birds were seen very well as they moved about in the branches of forest trees at 5–6 m above the ground (JSA, MACC). Both birds were similar with black breast bands, as one (presumed male) fed the other (presumed female) on a termite. Later in the day, with TMG, another pair was found in the same part of the forest.

The supraloral white spots led us to believe at first that they were Rwenzori Batis *B. diops*, with which we were familiar elsewhere in Uganda. Both had long white wing bars, lacked supercilia, and the whole of the crown and mantle were slate grey to black, with a pale patch on the nape or upper neck. No calls were heard.

The range of this species, formerly regarded as a race of *B. minima*, is restricted to northeastern Zaïre (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973), and is known from Iruma within 190 km to the west of the Ugandan locality (Chapin 1953).

Other species not present on the East African list but known from the eastern Ituri in Zaïre can be expected in western Uganda, and include the following known from the Zaïre side of the Semliki River: *Smithornis sharpei* Grey-headed Broadbill, *Psalidoprocne nitens* Square-tailed Rough-wing Swallow, *Criniger ndussumensis* White-bearded Greenbul, *Zoothera princei* Grey Ground Thrush, *Sylvietta denti* Lemon-bellied Crombec, *Platysteira tonsa* White-spotted Wattle-eye, *Dicrurus atripennis* Shining Drongo, and *Malimbus coronatus* Red-crowned Malimbe. Human pressure on Bwamba and the degraded nature of much of the forest stresses the need for competent and detailed surveys of the fauna and flora. One of our party, ADJ of the Makerere University Biological Field Station at Kibale, will be looking into this suggestion.

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